

Jason Hoch, sprawl refugee finds happiness in downtown Littleton



Jason Hoch couldn't go back to suburban Philadelphia where he grew up after discovering New England as a student at Williams College in Williamstown, MA. "I tell my parents, 'I love you dearly, but I can't handle the sprawl,'" says Hoch, 29. "There has got to be a better way!" Hoch is

doing more than just complaining about sprawl. He first came to Littleton five years ago, as the director of the town's Main Street program.

"I was looking for a traditional New England town where I could develop a strong sense of community," he says of his decision to adopt Littleton as his hometown. "And I liked the proximity of the mountains." Now the assistant town manager, Hoch says he sees familiar faces wherever he goes, and has been able "to establish deep roots in this community

faster than I ever imagined - that's what I love best." Hoch lives in an apartment on the third floor of a commercial building on Main Street. "The 'World's Longest Candy Counter' is two floors below me," Hoch brags. Living alone with his cat for company, he has the whole floor of the building - a four-bedroom apartment. He has turned one room into a library lined with books. "My friends come up from the city and cry when they see my apartment," Hoch reports. Those city friends are even more envious when they hear how affordable it is.

Hoch loves living downtown. "I have a three-minute walking commute to the office," he notes. "I only take my car out about once a week. If I need something quickly from a store, I just run out and get it. I don't waste any time getting into the car, driving, and parking." A while back friends asked Hoch to house-sit for a month. It was a nice house outside of town, but he says it made him realize how much

time, money, and hassle is involved in driving every time he needed to go somewhere.

Long-term, Hoch sees himself settling down in a small town, not right on Main Street, but within walking distance of downtown. Life in a vibrant urban neighborhood also holds appeal for him. Hoch wishes more young people would consider small town life. "The opportunities in a small town are tremendous," he says with enthusiasm, and the technology of the Internet age has reduced some of the old disadvantages of more small-town or rural locations. Hoch appreciates the opportunities he has had to take on responsibility and develop leadership skills. "At 26, I was president of the local affordable housing non-profit," he notes. "In the suburbs, I'd still be in a cubicle!"